

UKRAINE: Opinions about the first round of the presidential election

HRWF (02.04.2019) – The first round of the presidential election is over. Zelensky (about 30%) and Poroshenko (about 16%) will compete in a second round on 21 April. Ukrainian NGOs, Ukraine's Interior Ministry and international institutions reacted about the process.

CVU: Fair elections with no systemic violations that could affect the election results

CVU's Oleksii Koshel stated that in general, the election was fair and that there were no systemic violations that could affect the election results. "The election campaign was affected by the large use of negative campaigning but the conduct of the Election Day was of a high quality", said Koshel.

"In this election, the violation of the secrecy of the vote occurred on a mass scale", noted CVU analyst Denis Rybachok. Among the major violations CVU indicates inaccurate voter lists and wide-spread mistakes by precinct election commissions in registering voters, illegal campaigning during the day of silence and E-Day.

Observers also recorded a low level of performance on different levels of election commissions, with some cases of commissions counting votes before the vote was officially over and several cases of ballots being given to voters without checking for proper identification.

Voter turnout was quite low in Transcarpathia, Chernivtsi and

Kherson oblasts, which is believed to be due to the high number of labor migrants from these regions living abroad and the very small-scale political campaign run in these regions. Observers also recorded some cases of protest voting and ballot spoiling in Chernivtsi and Transcarpathia regions.

“For Ukrainians abroad, there were long queues to vote, regulatory barriers and other obstacles that inhibited their ability to vote, such as the financial cost to travel to polling stations repeatedly”, said Koshel. “There is a need to reform the voting system for Ukrainians living abroad, such as by increasing the number of polling stations or by allowing a postal vote.”

Unconfirmed bomb threats against polling stations and candidate headquarters in certain regions were not that widespread, however observers believe that this mechanism of disrupting the election may be used more actively in the second round of the election. In this election, polling stations worked continuously despite such cases of threats being made against polling stations.

The full statement can be found at <https://bit.ly/2CLCqBu>.

EPDE: “No politically biased election observation activities were identified” – Anton Shekhovtsov

During the first round of Presidential Elections, EPDE experts did not identify international politically biased election observation missions’ activities. “Such missions, however, could be activated during the second round”, stated Anton Shekhovtsov, EPDE analyst.

“The chief objective of politically biased international election observation is to mislead the local and international

public regarding the legitimacy of election results”, said Stefanie Schiffer, Head of the Board of EPDE. “These observation missions spread mistrust towards democratic institutions”.

Shekhovtsov recommended that the Ukrainian Central Election Commission should scrutinize the applications of international observers based on their potential former engagement within missions that aimed to discredit the institution of international election observation. He underlined the importance of sanctions against individuals who previously observed illegitimate elections in Crimea and in the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk. “This explains, at least partially, the lack of the so-called international fake observation in this election”.

“The fact that we did not have a visible activity of fake election observers is a sign of how resilience and a strict reaction from the side of the administration can protect the integrity of elections”, said Schiffer. “Other countries may be able to learn from Ukraine’s experience”. “In the 2014 Presidential elections we identified several fake election observation missions”, added Shekhovtsov. “These included missions lead by far-right activist Mateusz Piskorski from Poland and a mission lead by Hungary’s Jobik Party, which included members of the German far-right party Alternative for Germany (AFD)”.

Previously, EPDE members Civil Network Opora and Committee of Voters of Ukraine have reported a large number of Ukrainian politically motivated election observation groups. There were 139 domestic NGOs registered in Ukraine as election observation organizations, of which 85 have no previous experience of election observation, more than 30 NGOs had connections to a single presidential candidate, and only five observed the 2014 Presidential elections. “We can see a

violations, Kharkiv – 197, and Poltava – 101. Thirty-nine criminal proceedings have been opened,” Viktoria Navrotska, the deputy director of the liaison department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine wrote on her Facebook page.

The ministry clarified that these facts are related to: illegal campaigning – 135; photographing ballots – 129; voters’ bribery – 45; bulletin damage – 34; a false bomb threat – 18; an attempt to remove the bulletin from the polling station – 13. Thirty-nine criminal proceedings have been opened.

Prosecutor General’s Office opened a criminal case about an ‘anonymous’ illegal financing of a political party: more than 70,000 EUR (Video)

Prosecutor General’s Office <https://bit.ly/2TQEOGi>– According to the procedural guidance of the Kyiv prosecutor’s office, investigators of the SSU SBU in Kiev have been notified of suspicion of a citizen of Ukraine who has paid contributions in support of one of the political parties for a total amount of more than UAH 2.2 million while remaining anonymous, that is, committed a crime.

The fact is that this person entered into a preliminary agreement with the head of the department of one of the Ukrainian banks, which, secured the illegal registration of payments and the selection of persons on behalf of which unlawful banking operations were carried out.

The suspect paid to the account of the political party, while illegally using personal data of 15 Ukrainian citizens and not

indicating themselves as the owner of the funds and their payer, thus remaining anonymous person. The Prosecutor General's Office opened a criminal investigation.

EU: Preliminary data say first round of Ukraine election "decent"

UNIAN (01.04.2109 – 12h50) – <https://bit.ly/2ULTkAB> – Head of the European Delegation to Ukraine, Ambassador Hugues Mingarelli, says no reports have been received so far of any significant violations of election law following the first round of Ukraine presidential election.

"We are waiting for the ODIHR assessment. I guess we will have the first assessment today. Up to now, we have not heard anything about serious violations of the law but again we are waiting for the ODIHR assessment," said Mingarelli. At the same time, he noted that observers from the EU member states were present at a large number of polling stations. "We have not been told that there were major violations. Therefore, our preliminary feeling, assessment, is that the elections were carried out in a decent way," stressed Mingarelli.

OSCE Mission: Elections in Ukraine were free, competitive

The first round of the presidential elections in Ukraine was competitive and citizens had the opportunity to freely express their will, the OSCE PA Election Observation Mission in Ukraine has said.

Such conclusions were made public by the OSCE Special Coordinator, Honorary President of the OSCE Parliamentary

Assembly Ilkka Kanerva during a joint press conference of representatives of the mission of international election observers in Ukraine consisting of representatives of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the European Parliament (EP) and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA).

“This presidential election was competitive. Voters had a broad choice and turned out in high numbers,” OSCE Special Coordinator Ilkka Kanerva said. “Fundamental freedoms were generally respected. Candidates could campaign freely.”

“Election Day was assessed positively overall and paves the way to the second round,” he quoted a statement of preliminary findings and conclusions by the International Election Observation Mission on Ukraine’s March 31 presidential election.

“My personal conclusion is that this competitive election has laid the groundwork for the vibrant second round. I hope that this will encourage Ukraine to continue on its path of democratic development at peace and security within its internationally recognized borders in our community of European values,” he said.

Kanerva paid attention to the fact that there were many international observers at the election, which helped minimize violations.

He said the violations established during the day of voting, did not in general influence the result of the vote. He added that elections could not be organized in Crimea and areas of Ukraine not under Ukraine's control.

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